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STATE FOR WHA/CAR (JOE TILGHMAN)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/10/2017  
TAGS: [PINR](#) [ASEC](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [SOCI](#) [ECON](#) [JM](#) [XL](#)  
SUBJECT: JAMAICA: NEW PRIME MINISTER BRUCE GOLDING

REF: KINGSTON 2150

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission James T. Heg,  
reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

#### Summary

1.(U) A new era in Jamaican Politics will be ushered in September 11, 2007, when Orette Bruce Golding takes the oath of office as the country's ninth Prime Minister. Governor General Professor Kenneth Hall will swear in Golding during a public ceremony at 4:00 PM local time (5:00 PM EDT). This cable provides updated biographical information on Bruce Golding. End Summary.

#### Background

2.(U) Bruce Golding was born December 5, 1947 in Ginger Ridge, St. Catherine, Jamaica. He attended St. Georges College, Jamaica College, and The University of West Indies [UWI], receiving a BA in Economics in 1969. Less than three weeks after completing his final exams at UWI, Golding was selected as candidate for West St. Catherine at a special conference of the Jamaica Labour Party [JLP] in that constituency. Golding comes from a long family background of political activity; he was two years old when his father Tacius Golding was elected a member of the House of Representatives, a seat which Golding Sr. retained for 22 years until retirement in 1972. Bruce Golding, who was elected to his first seat in 1972, was the youngest person ever elected to Parliament at age 24. He is married to Lorna Golding; they have one son and two daughters, one of whom studied law at Georgetown University. Golding enjoys fishing, hunting, swimming and motoring. His heroes are Martin Luther King and Marcus Garvey

3.(U) Bruce Golding served as the Minister of Construction for the JLP from 1980-1989. He served as Shadow Minister of Finance for the JLP from 1989-1995; he was hand-picked by Edward Seaga, long-time JLP party President and the last JLP Prime Minister.

4.(SBU) In 1995, Golding resigned from the JLP and helped to form a third political party, the National Democratic Movement [NDM], after a falling out with Seaga and the other JLP leadership. The rift was caused by widening ideological differences with the JLP faction headed by Seaga, and compounded when Seaga publicly announced that only he was suitable to lead the party. Initially there was a great deal of interest in the NDM, but that

popularity never translated into success at the election box, perhaps because it was assumed the NDM would side with the JLP in a coalition government, leading to Seaga as the Prime Minister at a time when his public support was waning. The NDM never managed to win a single seat in Parliament, and after the initial contest, never even won a significant number of votes in any race. Golding himself was a distant second place in the race for Parliament and the NDM only received about five percent of the total vote during the 1997 election. (While the NDM still exists, Golding left the fledgling party in October 2002 and returned to the JLP).

5.(U) Bruce Golding was elected Chairman of the JLP in November 2003. While the 2002 election was still a People's National Party [PNP] victory, the JLP made a surprisingly strong showing, winning 26 out of 60 seats. Golding was widely credited with the JLP's strong performance, which resurrected his political career. Golding served as Shadow Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade for the JLP until April 2005. Following Seaga's resignation, Golding was elected the Chairman of the JLP on February 20 of that year. In the April 2005 election, Golding easily defeated the PNP's Joseph B. Witter to become a Member of Parliament for West Kingston, taking over Seaga's previous seat, and becoming the Opposition Leader; a position he held until the September 2007 election results were announced. Golding will be sworn in as the ninth Prime Minister of Jamaica, on Tuesday, September 11 at 4:00 PM local time (5:00 PM EDT). The announcement of the new Cabinet Members is expected to follow on September 12.

#### Election 2007

6.(SBU) Leading up to the general election campaign, Golding had a reputation as a technocrat, and had exhibited a weaker public image than the charismatic Prime Minister Portia Simpson-Miller [PM PSM]. Golding was able to overcome these weaknesses with a strong performance in the televised national political debates against PSM. He is widely considered intelligent, articulate, and capable, and has exhibited strong statesmanlike rhetoric and actions since the September 3, 2007 election. He appears to have united the JLP and to enjoy the backing of the entire party, in contrast to the outgoing PM PSM who does not command the full support of the PNP, which suffers from grass-roots fractionalization.

Prime Minister Elect Golding's stance toward the United States and plans for the new government

7.(C) Golding is normally seen as favorably disposed towards the United States (See Reftel), although he is likely to be more demanding than previous leaders. Golding has a strong thirst for information, and will likely request assistance and information from the Embassy and USG. In recent meetings and conversations with representatives from the UK, Canada and the U.S., he has expressed a desire to work with our governments in building a more vibrant Jamaica. (Note: Golding requested Embassy assistance to arrange meetings in Washington, and made an unpublicized visit there in March 2007, during which he met with inter alia then WHA DAS Patrick Duddy and officers from WHA/CAR. End Note). He is a strong believer in civil liberties and justice and was publicly criticized by former DCM Cliff Tighe for his comments against an anti-terrorism bill proposed by the GOJ post 9-11. At the time, Golding stated, "I don't believe that there are any terrorists in the world who hold such a grudge against Jamaica." After Golding's quote appeared in the local media, then-DCM Tighe responded harshly that Golding's position was, "disappointing, both in terms of substance and context."

8.(C) Golding has promised to work on many reforms, including education, weeding out corruption in the police,

and increasing growth in the economy. As he attempts to rid the Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF) of its corrupt elements, it is likely he will approach the US Embassy and UK High Commission to request files and records on corrupt police. Golding has a reputation for having an appetite for information, and is a self-described workaholic; he often arrives in the office hours before his secretary.

9.(C) In his acceptance speech, on the eve of the September 3 national elections, Golding commented QHowever perplexing some may find the result, the fact is the people have spoken.Q He further pledged to work with both parties in forging constructive engagement to create a new paradigm. He eloquently stated QOne People, One Nation, One JamaicaQ as his rallying cry. Golding appears to understand the tenuous margin of victory won by the JLP and appreciates that in order to usher in lasting reforms he will need to work together with the PNP to pass the necessary legislation. The JLP has set the bar high for their plan of action, including many reforms set to take effect during the first 100 days of the new government. Whether they will be successful in reforming ailing infrastructure, and in finding enough funding to cover ambitious plans for free education and health care, remains to be seen.

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